

# March 2008 Newsletter

## Native Plant Society of Texas - South Texas Chapter



### March 6th – Monthly Meeting – Guest Speaker Dr. Alice Hempel

Thursday at 7 p.m. at the Garden Senior Center, 5325 Greely Drive, Corpus Christi.

Dr. Alice Hempel of Texas A&M University-Kingsville, will present an overview of the sunflower family.

### Please Support the Garden Council

Our chapter is able to meet at the Garden Senior Center for free because we are a part of the Corpus Christi Garden Council – all we pay is \$20 a year. Therefore, each club needs to support the annual Garden Tour which is the Garden Council Fund raiser.

Our Next Meeting is April 3<sup>rd</sup>

**Speaker: TBA**

### Do You Know Your Natives???"



Contributed by: USDA-NRCS Kika de la Garza Plant Materials Center  
Gayfeather (*Liatris* spp.) is an herbaceous, perennial member of the Asteraceae family (Lehman, O'Brien, and White, 2005). It is also known by the common names liatris or blazing star. There are forty species confined to North America with twelve of these native to Texas and seven native to South Texas (Correll and Johnston, 1996). The flowers are usually purple and rarely white, with ray flowers absent and disk flowers numerous (Correll and Johnston, 1996). They bloom from June to October depending on the species.

They can be found on sand, clay, caliche, or loam soils depending on the species (Correll and Johnston, 1996 & Lehman, O'Brien, and White, 2005). White-tailed deer are known to browse the leaves of gayfeather

(Everitt, Drawe, and Lonard, 1999). The plants form corms underground (Correll and Johnston, 1996) and die back to the ground each year. The fall transplanted corms of gayfeathers do well under cultivation (Ajilvsgi, 1984). Corms have also been used to treat sore throat and rattlesnake bites in the past, resulting in another common name, button-snakeroot (Ajilvsgi, 1984).



The plants reproduce by seed. The fruit is an achene with pappus (hairy parachute-like appendages). It is easier to locate plants while in bloom, but seed cannot be collected until dry and brown or black in color. The hairy appendages on the seed should be off-white in color. If they are still purple or pink, the seed is not mature. Look for plants beginning to lose their seed as a sign of maturity.

Gayfeather is commonly available in the horticulture trade, but the PMC is working on releasing a native ecotype for the conservation practices of 562 Recreation Area Improvement and 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat. If you find a population of any species of *Liatris* in South Texas, the PMC would appreciate a seed collection.

Info Sources: *Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas* - Correll and Johnston; *Plants of the Texas Coastal Bend* - Lehman, O'Brien, & White; *Field Guide to the Broad-Leaved Herbaceous Plants of South Texas* – Everitt, Drawe, & Lonard; *Wildflowers of Texas* – Geyata Ajilvagi; and research performed at the PMC.





**Upcoming Events** (361) 852-2100 [www.ccbotanicalgardens.org](http://www.ccbotanicalgardens.org)

- **Creating Wildlife Habitat Landscapes** seminar - **April 5<sup>th</sup>** 10 a.m. to noon. Master Gardener/Master Naturalist Ernie Edmunson will show students how to transform their backyards into lush, colorful habitats for birds and butterflies by landscaping with South Texas native plants. Seminar fees are \$6, \$3.50 for members. Call for seminar reservations.
- **BIG BLOOM!** - **April 12<sup>th</sup>** from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. – The only plant sale & gardening festival of the year on Gardens & Nature Center ground. It's also DOLLAR DAY—visitors will be admitted for \$1 each. Children under age 5 and members will be admitted free. Besides shopping the big, annual plant sale, look for free children's activities, participate in beneficial insect releases, and tour the Gardens & Nature Center! Call for vendor, membership, volunteer or other information.
- **Basics of Floral Design** - **April 19<sup>th</sup>** from 10 a.m. to noon - Hobbyist Nan Bailey teaches attractive but simple designs, bud arrangements, wreaths, bow-making and basket arrangements. Class fees are \$6, \$3.50 for members. Call for reservations.
- **What's Bugging You?** - **April 26<sup>th</sup>** from 10 a.m. to noon - Learn to recognize the difference between pests and beneficial landscape insects at the seminar. Master Gardener Cindy Straub shares her expertise on insect varieties, identification and best methods to control the bad guys in your landscape. Class fees are \$6, \$3.50 for members. Call for reservations.

### **NPSOT Calendar Fall 2007- Spring 2008**

- **March 6<sup>th</sup>** - NPSOT Monthly Meeting 7 p.m. – Dr. Alice Hempel – Sunflowers
- **April 3<sup>rd</sup>** - NPSOT Monthly Meeting 7 p.m. – Speaker T.B.A.
- **May 1<sup>st</sup>** - NPSOT Monthly Meeting 7 p.m. – Speaker T.B.A.
- **June – August – No meetings.** Have a safe summer!

### **Chapter Contacts**

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**State Web Site** [www.npsot.org](http://www.npsot.org)